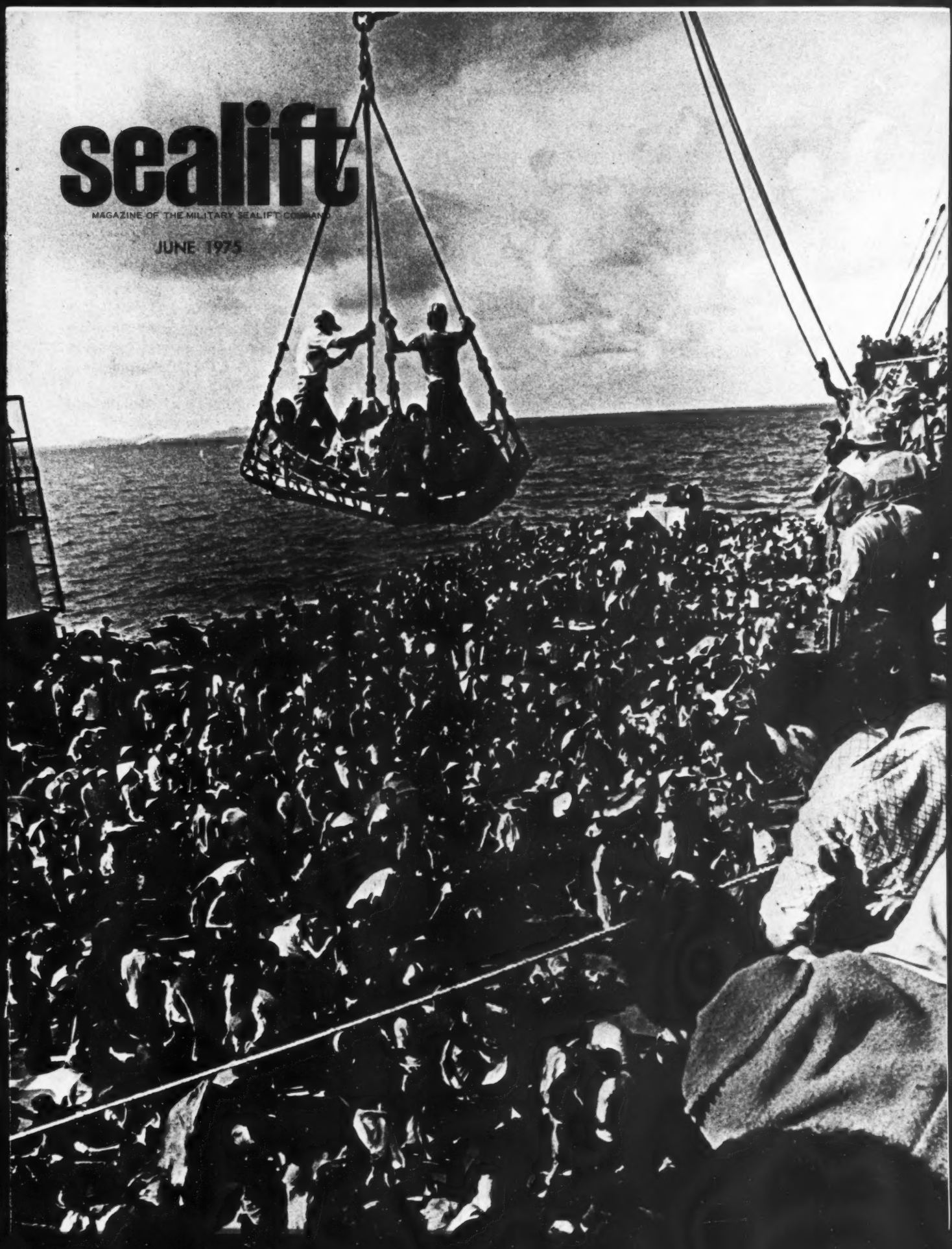

sealift
MAGAZINE OF THE MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND
JUNE 1975

Another MSC Chapter Comes to A Close

The 10-year American involvement in the 30-year Vietnamese war has ended, and with it comes the close of another chapter of Military Sealift Command history.

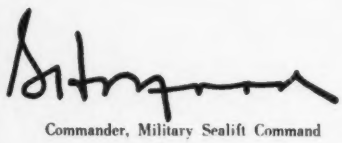
MSC opened its office in Saigon during April 1965. Ten years and millions of tons of cargo later, the Saigon office was vacated and transferred to the flagship of the commander of Task Force 76, continuing, however, coordination of the evacuation of Vietnamese refugees for days after the last Americans had been airlifted from Saigon.

We have come full circle. MSC was there at the beginning and remained even after the political end of South Vietnam to coordinate a humanitarian effort rarely paralleled in history. The dedication and professionalism of MSC personnel never faltered, and we can all take pride in the fact that our people performed with distinction.

During the evacuation of nearly 113,000 civilian refugees from the Vietnamese coastal areas, and the subsequent evacuation of Saigon, Phu Quoc and Con Son islands, those manning the MSC office in Saigon, and the MSC controlled ships involved, exhibited the selfless courage and devotion that have become hallmarks of the command's tradition, and an example for those who will follow. To those who worked hard through long days and nights, you can take pride in knowing that without you thousands may not have survived the ordeals of the past two months.

The exploits and dedication of MSC people and ships are illustrated on the following pages. They are too numerous for me to attempt to highlight here. The articles that follow chronicle the 14 ships and crews that conducted the evacuation and the events that marked each day's activity. They serve to spotlight some of the people involved at MSC headquarters, at our office in Saigon and aboard our ships at sea. And the photographs help tell the story.

Historians will debate for many years the course and outcome of the war in Southeast Asia. It will be difficult to detach ourselves and to judge objectively a part of history that played such an important role in our lives. Perhaps that is as it should be. Nevertheless, we can take pride in the fact that thousands of innocent people escaped the war and were given a chance to start a new life through the efforts of the men and women of Military Sealift Command. I am proud to be a part of this organization.



Commander, Military Sealift Command

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MAGAZINE OF THE MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND

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COVER: Assisted by Green Port crewmen, South Vietnamese refugees are hoisted in a cargo net and lowered to a barge for the mile-long trip to Phu Quoc.—Photo by MSgt. Chuck McCormick.

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Beginning of the End

On March 24, the U.S. State Department through the Defense attache's office (DAO) in Saigon requested that resources of Seapac Inc., a tug and barge company, be made available to aid in the evacuation of DaNang. The city's normal population of 500,000 had swelled to a million within a few days after the North Vietnamese offensive.

The next day DAO, a part of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, requested the SS Pioneer Contender, an MSC controlled ship under charter from United States Lines, and the SS Transcolorado, chartered by MSC from Seatrain Lines, also sail to DaNang. That day, MSC Commander Rear Adm. Sam H. Moore outlined the command's emergency sealift capability for Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet Adm. Noel Gaylor.

Admiral Moore reported that 11 MSC controlled ships could be immediately made available for an evacuation effort. USNS Miller was on her way to Keelung to load retrograde cargo for the U.S. East Coast. She could be in DaNang by March 27. SS Green Port was discharging cargo at Pusan. She could reach the stricken port by March 30. USNS Kimbro was enroute to Kaohsiung to discharge 400 measurement tons of ammo. She could reach DaNang by April 1. Pioneer Commander could get there by April 2. She was loading ammo at Vayama for Subic Bay arsenals. SS American Racer was on her way to Pusan with 5,000 vehicles. She could be available by April 10. USNS Greenville Victory also was enroute to Vayama with ammo. She could be emptied and in DaNang by April 4. SS Green Wave and SS Green Forest could get there by April 18. The SS Pioneer Contender could be on the scene by March 28, the Transcolorado and American Challenger by March 31.

MSC was ready, and Admiral Moore assured CINCPAC that command-controlled ships could do the job. Eventually all but the Green Forest, American Racer, Kimbro and Green Wave would be involved in the first phase of the emergency sealift.

At 3:45 p.m. Saigon time on March 28, Military Sealift Command was directed to evacuate civilian refugees. Capt. Darrel D. Ruebsamen, MSC, Far East commander, based in Yokohama, immediately diverted four MSC controlled cargo ships to DaNang. Before the evacuation was over on April 10, five chartered and two government-owned ships operated by MSC lifted nearly 113,000 refugees to safer areas.

Timely and complete information, typically, was a casualty of the crisis. Estimates of the number of refugees varied, but news dispatches reported a tragedy in the making. MSC's responsibility was to attempt to lessen its impact by performing one of the most difficult and timely sealifts in almost 26 years of command history. Funding and guidance for the humanitarian effort came from the State Department's Agency for International Development (AID), and the Embassy staff in Saigon.

The speed with which the South Vietnamese crisis mounted caught much of the world off-guard. When it became evident that a massive evacuation of refugees was required, Admiral Moore ordered MSC's Seapac assets, five tugs and seven barges, to sail to DaNang. The city reportedly was in chaos. Refugees from Hue and the highlands had poured into the city seeking safety. As Communist troops advanced on the city, the fall of DaNang was imminent.

Seapac's task was to transfer refugees from the shore to deep-draft cargo ships already heading for the city at full steam. On March 28, the Joint Chiefs of Staff named Admiral Gaylor to coordinate the evacuation. Embarked in the USS Blue Ridge, Capt. William

D. Hart was named the on-scene commander. The humanitarian effort was under way.

As darkness fell on DaNang March 27, U.S. press representatives on the scene described the city as drowning in fear. Occasionally, the dull thud of a South Vietnamese Army howitzer could be heard in the distance. Ships, hotels and banks shuttered their windows early in the day. The streets were almost impassable because of the throngs of refugees. Attempts to use chartered commercial aircraft to evacuate South Vietnamese failed as panicky crowds on the ground prevented aircraft from landing. One commercial aircraft managed to fly away—taking off from a taxi strip—with refugees hanging from cargo doors and even stowed away in the wheel wells.

Riding on his sister's back, a small boy waits to board an MSC rescue ship.

At the American Consulate in downtown DaNang, the wind banged the doors of deserted offices and swept papers off desks. A handful of U.S. Marine guards remained to protect the few key Americans who were to be the last evacuated. Airport runways were littered with rubber sandals, fragments of silk clothing, bamboo hats, broken toys, electric fans and other flotsam left behind by fleeing people.

Both Pioneer Contender and USNS Miller arrived in DaNang the next day, and Seapac tug crews set to work ferrying refugees to the ships.

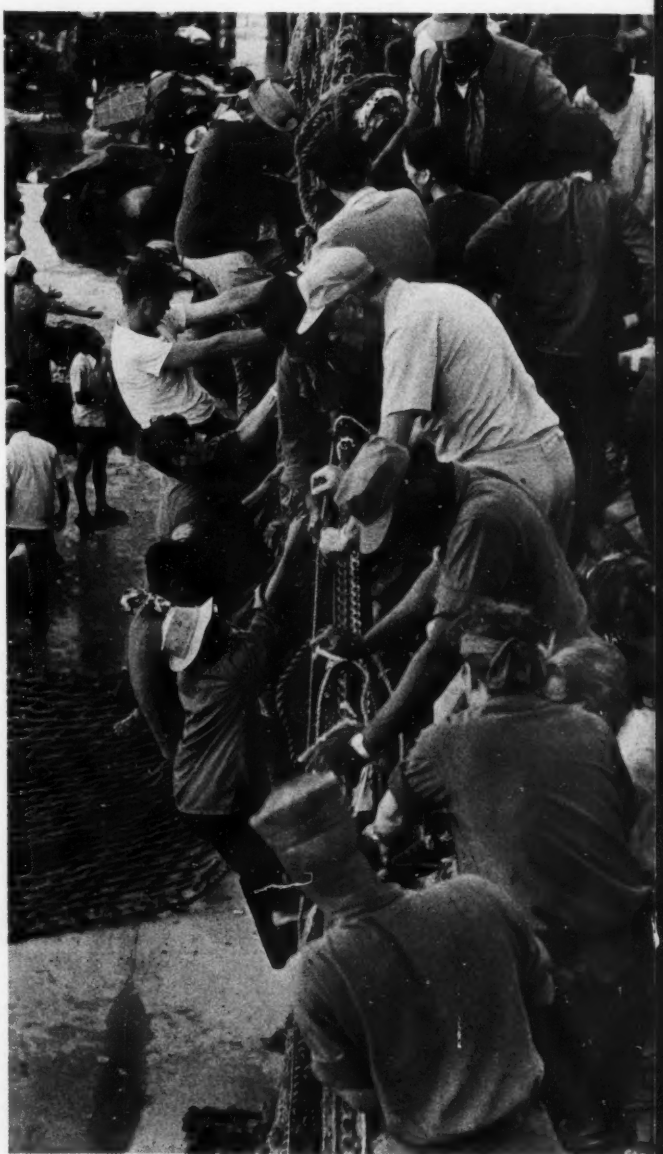
Roland Schamberger, Southeast Asia general manager of Alaska Barge and Transport, which managed Seapac assets in South Vietnam for MSC, wired company president Lewis Johnson in Seattle. "All AB&T personnel evacuated from DaNang at 8:45 a.m. today

by order of the U.S. Embassy. All property destroyed or abandoned. Alaska Barge personnel continue to function as Navy Military Sealift Command representatives, coordinating all vessel activities involved with refugee evacuation."

"One tug will continue to be used as command center for our staff and U.S. Embassy personnel. Tugs and barges encountering difficult conditions in DaNang harbor as thousands attempting to board barges and ships from sampans and other craft. Embassy reports DaNang crowd control impossible. Therefore canceled all attempts of air evacuation. This leaves only sea evacuation for more than half million persons. We must remain involved as long as possible to evacuate as many persons as we can."

For the next 12 days the scene was similar up and down the lower coast of South Vietnam. MSC cargo ships ferried thousands of people to places of relative safety. And as port city after port city fell, first DaNang, then Cam Ranh, the agonizing flight was repeated. Civilian tug and ship crews worked day and night without sleep. The logistics problems were enormous. Acts of selfless heroism were common as seamen gave their clothing, food or water to the refugees.

Eventually five MSC controlled ships ended up at Phu Quoc Island in the Gulf of Siam near the Cambodian border. The island, once a camp for prisoners of the South Vietnamese government, initially was ill-suited to handle the mass of refugees. But stores ships from the U.S. Navy's Seventh Fleet transferred tons of food and water to the island and to the MSC vessels waiting to be unloaded. Problems aboard ships were abundant. Despite these problems, however, the MSC sealift gave thousands of South Vietnamese an opportunity to escape from the advancing forces who once more had brought the war to their very doorstep.—*HLR*



Assisted by Green Port crewmen and U.S. Marine security guards, Vietnamese climb down the ship's sides onto a Seapac barge.

Escape from Saigon

On April 28, as rockets fell on Tan Son Nhut Air Base 15 miles from Saigon and North Vietnamese tanks zeroed in on the beleaguered city, U.S. Ambassador Graham Martin launched the final evacuation of Americans and South Vietnamese. Within 18 hours nearly 1,400 Americans and some 6,000 South Vietnamese had been lifted from the city by 80 Marine, Navy and Air Force helicopters as part of Operation Frequent Wind.

Hundreds of Navy, Marine and Air Force tactical and support aircraft were on hand to protect the evacuation effort. However, rockets hitting the air strips at Tan Son Nhut had effectively closed off the option of using fixed wing aircraft in the final withdrawal from South Vietnam.

While nearly 7,500 people were lifted out of the Saigon area by U.S. helicopters, many South Vietnamese clambered aboard small boats, fishing craft, barges, sampans and even homemade rafts for an arduous trip down the Saigon River to the sea. There, 80 U.S. ships were maneuvering offshore, ready to receive the American evacuees and those South Vietnamese who might make their way to safety.

Many did, in a ragtag variety of surface craft and in South Vietnamese military helicopters. Vietnamese-piloted helos landed on the decks and in the water alongside Navy ships, sometimes interfering with the military aircraft as their occupants—men, women and children—sought to escape South Vietnam.

Sixteen MSC ships were among those involved in Frequent Wind, and in Operation New Life which followed. Frequent Wind was the code name of the evacuation from South Vietnam, while New Life described the subsequent passage of the South Vietnamese to freedom via ships and aircraft which delivered refugees at Guam and Subic Bay.

While it is difficult to sort out the several phases of the overall rescue effort in Vietnam, MSC controlled ships moved some 113,000 people in the first phase which began with the exodus from the DaNang area. That started March 28 and went on for about two weeks, with most of the refugees from points south of DaNang being moved to Phu Quoc Island.

Between the completion of the initial rescue operations and the beginning of final withdrawal of Americans from South Vietnam, MSC ship and support crews remained busy, cleaning up their ships, putting food and medical supplies aboard, taking on fuel, and generally preparing for their role in Frequent Wind.

MSC assets involved included four government-owned ships, USNS Greenville Victory, USNS Miller, USNS Kimbro, and USNS Rincon. The latter, a tanker, was used to refuel both Seventh Fleet and other MSC ships.

Commercial ships involved were the Pioneer Commander, Pioneer Contractor, Pioneer Contender, American Challenger, and American Racer, all of which were under charter by MSC from United States Lines. Others were the Green Port, Green Forest and Green Wave, all

Sampans loaded with refugees approach MSC ships off DaNang.

chartered by MSC from Central Gulf Steamship Co.

Also in action was SeaTrain Lines' SS Transcolorado, another MSC-chartered ship, and several vessels chartered from foreign owners. They included two LSTs, the Boo Heung Pioneer and M/V Audaz, and a tanker, Vera 8. Rounding out the MSC-controlled assets which played a historic role in the State Department-controlled humanitarian operation were seven tugs and 14 barges managed by Alaska Barge and Transport Inc. under another MSC contract.

Altogether, these ships carried about 58,000 people from coastal waters of Vietnam to Guam or Subic Bay. By May 9, all but five had been unloaded. They were either in port at Guam or Subic or only hours away. That did not mark the end of Operation New Life, however, for two MSC controlled ships were standing by ready to move another 6,000 to 7,000 refugees living in a variety of small vessels off shore near Singapore. If denied landing rights there, they were to be moved to Guam or Subic in MSC vessels since their own craft were dangerously small or ill-equipped for such a voyage.

MSC ships began their role in Frequent Wind on April 25 when SS Green Wave was ordered to Newport, a small port near downtown Saigon. There the Green Wave's crew loaded 625 refugees and sailed for Subic Bay.

The next day American Challenger docked at Long Hai on the southern coast of Vietnam and loaded 8,600 refugees bound for Phu Quoc. While she was being unloaded at Phu Quoc on the morning of the 29th, the South Vietnamese government surrendered. The rescue operation again moved into high gear.

On April 30, American Challenger sailed for Subic Bay with 2,500 refugees aboard. The ship was diverted to Vung Tau to take aboard another 2,500 before continuing on its mercy mission.

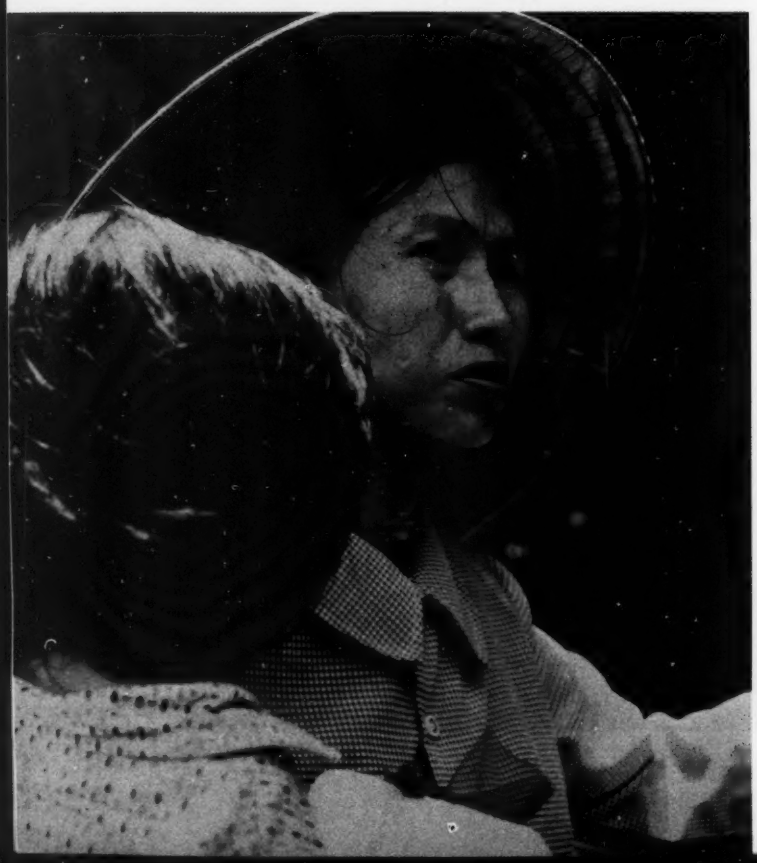
Meanwhile in Saigon, Donald Berney, chief of the MSC Office, Vietnam, boarded a U.S. Marine Corps helicopter along with a longtime Vietnamese employee of the office, Nguyen Huu Hoang, early in the evening of April 24. They flew to the amphibious ship USS Blue Ridge and signaled Berney's assistant, William Ryder, who was still in the Saigon area, that they had set up communications with headquarters in Washington and the MSC ships in the area. After Saigon was evacuated, the men coordinated MSC rescue operations from Blue Ridge. Hoang, a one-time English instructor, translated messages from Vietnamese trying to locate the rescue ships.

On April 29 when the South Vietnamese government surrendered, Ryder packed the office's sensitive communications equipment and loaded it aboard the tug Chitose Maru at Newport. Accompanied by Vietnamese employees who had elected to stay to the very end, Ryder met with several AB&T employees who, despite company suggestions, had remained behind to keep Newport operating and to coordinate MSC tug and barge operations.

Joining AB&T's general manager in Vietnam, Roland L. Schamberger, and employees Marvin Baker, Ronald Ross, Harry Naeole, Robert Reeves, Ronald King and Jerrold Pierle, Ryder and the other Americans formed a convoy of three tugs, three barges and the chartered LST Boo Heung Pioneer. The convoy started downstream after loading several thousands refugees aboard the barges at Saigon. Despite some small arms fire from the banks of the Saigon River, the convoy made it to Vung Tau at the river's mouth and then headed out to sea to rendezvous with the USS Blue Ridge.

Reporting to MSC headquarters in Washington, Ryder said "the performance of the contractor personnel was outstanding, including pier operations, refugee handling, security and maintaining high visibility to reassure the South Vietnamese troops. By keeping the port operational, several thousand people were rescued at Newport. Working around the clock under great tension and exposed to physical danger, all hands performed in an outstanding manner . . . right up to transfer to the Blue Ridge. Their unselfishness and courageous spirit are worthy of recognition."

On May 2 Pioneer Contender docked at Vung Tau and loaded 6,000 refugees for Subic. Arriving the next day, the Pioneer Contender crew helped 2,000 refugees disembark for a later trip to Guam. The ship continued



A Vietnamese woman waits to climb the brow of the Pioneer Commander.

to Guam after taking on fresh provisions. The American Challenger bypassed Subic and headed straight for Guam with 5,000 evacuees.

Pioneer Commander, USNS Miller, USNS Kimbro and USNS Greenville Victory also arrived at Vung Tau on May 2. Commander loaded 5,000 refugees, Miller 4,500 and Greenville Victory 3,000. Kimbro took aboard 4,500.

During the four-day transit to Guam, several children were born aboard the ship. Many refugees, crewmen and Marine security guards came down with diseases commonplace during the evacuation, pink eye and diarrhea. However, Navy doctors and hospital corpsmen were aboard to treat the sick—a service not available when MSC ships were first committed to the rescue effort.

The first day aboard the Kimbro was difficult. Capt. Wayne Taylor said his crew worked around the clock to provide food and water, and to aid the refugees in every way possible.

Thirty Americans were aboard the Kimbro along with 3 Swiss, 1 Belgian, 11 French, 6 Chinese, 47 Koreans and 10 Filipinos.

On the afternoon of May 3, Captain Taylor radioed MSC, Far East in Yokohama that "Nguyen Thi Hieu gave birth to a 6-pound-4-ounce boy named Kun Kimbro." The ship's namesake was delivered by two Navy hospital corpsmen aboard.

With food and water available to the refugees, the refugee morale was good and Kimbro had smooth sailing to Subic Bay, arriving on May 4. The refugees were unloaded and the cargo ship's crew prepared to ferry more refugees between Subic Bay and Guam.

Their voyage had begun when they boarded MSC ships a few miles off Vung Tau. Thousands of refugees had fought the choppy seas to reach the cargo ships aboard anything that would float. One group pulled up alongside the Kimbro in an old, barely seaworthy Saigon ferryboat. They told the captain they had bought the boat for 46 million piasters, nearly $66,000 in U.S. currency.

A South Vietnamese helicopter tried to land in a barge alongside the USNS Miller but was unsuccessful. Many of the helos were flown to the evacuation ships and then ditched in the ocean. Apparently angered, an impatient crew aboard the South Vietnamese ship Dong Hoi at one time tried to ram the USS Wilson, also unsuccessfully.

The SS Green Wave sailed from ship to ship among the U.S. Navy Seventh Fleet vessels picking up refugees who had reached those ships. When more than 4,000 people had been loaded aboard, the Green Wave sailed for Guam.

SS Green Forest loaded 3,000 refugees who had sailed to Con Son Island aboard sampans and rafts. They were taken to Subic Bay.

Other MSC ships also were involved. A flotilla of South Vietnamese Navy ships carrying about 20,000 refugees had set sail for Subic Bay soon after the fall of Saigon. The ships were under-manned and ill-equipped to handle the tremendous number of evacuees. The USNS Rincon shuttled fuel to the flotilla and USNS Lipan, an MSC-operated, Navy fleet support tug took some vessels under tow—delivering them at Subic Bay.

In that last desperate flight from South Vietnam, nearly 80 Navy and MSC-owned and chartered ships were involved. Commenting on the evacuation effort, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. James L. Holloway III said:

"This operation will stand as a tribute to the courage, determination and perseverance of the Navy men, Marines and MSC crews who brought it off. I proudly congratulate each of them. The dramatic success of this most difficult and complex operation was almost more than we could have hoped for. The credit for this landmark accomplishment must go to the operational forces involved."—*HLR*

Near Cam Ranh Bay, sampans head through the rain toward MSC rescue ships.

The Ships

Seven ships already under operational control of MSC lifted nearly 113,000 South Vietnamese refugees in the pre-Saigon evacuation that began March 28. Five commercial ships sailing under MSC charter and two government owned cargo vessels carried the refugees.

Three of the commercial vessels involved, SS Pioneer Contender, SS Pioneer Commander, and SS American Challenger, are operated for MSC by United States Lines, Inc. Also carrying refugees were SS Green Port, operated for MSC by the Central Gulf Steamship Corp., and SS Transcolorado, operated by Seatrain Lines for MSC. Government-owned vessels involved in the early operation were USNS Greenville Victory and USNS Sgt. Andrew Miller, both commanded and crewed by U.S. Civil Service mariners.

SS Pioneer Contender began the refugee evacuation effort on March 28. Anchored in strong swells in the South China Sea off DaNang harbor, she took on 5,600 South Vietnamese fleeing the threatened city.

Refugees jammed the holds and decks and climbed onto the superstructure, a scene repeated on other ships as well. After the Contender's crew delivered an initial load of refugees to Cam Ranh, the ship returned to DaNang where 6,000 more South Vietnamese were picked up for a second lift to Cam Ranh.

On April 5, Contender arrived at Phu Quoc Island in the Gulf of Siam, remaining there for several days awaiting transportation to take refugees ashore. The 16,600 refugees aboard were the largest group moved in a single ship during the evacuation effort.

Water hose couplings broke several times under the scorching sun as the ship's crew tried to keep water barrels filled.

Until the Contender's lift of 16,600 South Vietnamese refugees, SS Meredith Victory held the unofficial record for the largest number of people carried by a single MSC ship. In December 1950 the Meredith Victory, a commercial cargo vessel under charter to MSC, carried 14,000 Koreans who were fleeing the Chinese Communists from Hungnam, Korea to a refugee camp on an island near the southern tip of Korea.

Some 16,600 refugees fill the decks of Pioneer Contender, waiting for barges to land them at Phu Quoc.

A Victory-type cargo ship built in 1945 and owned by Moore-McCormack Lines, the Meredith Victory had facilities for only 12 passengers. The vessel has since been turned over to the Maritime Administration and placed in the reserve fleet at Suisun Bay, Calif.

Pioneer Contender carried a total of 28,200 refugees south during the first two weeks of the evacuation. Contender and the SS Pioneer Commander are both Challenger-class cargo vessels. Built in 1963 by Bethlehem Steel Corp. in Quincy, Mass., they have been operating under MSC control for several years. Overall length of both the Contender and Commander is 560 feet. Each has a 75-foot beam and a draft of 31½ feet.

Crew of the Pioneer Commander evacuated 16,000 refugees in two voyages. The ship arrived in Cam Ranh March 31, carrying 8,000 refugees fleeing DaNang. When Nha Trang, 25 miles north of Cam Ranh, fell, crew of the Commander picked up 8,000 more refugees and lifted them from Nha Trang to Phu Quoc Island.

SS American Challenger carried 9,850 refugees from Cam Ranh to Phu Quoc Island, where she lay at anchor for several days before the refugees could be put ashore.

American Challenger was built in 1962 by the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Co., Newport News, Va., and is under long-term charter to MSC. Her overall length is 560½ feet, with a 75½-foot beam and a draft of 31½ feet.

Safety of the SS Green Port crew was jeopardized at one point by refugees who tried to compel the master to take them to Vung Tau rather than Phu Quoc Island.

However, Green Port made it to Phu Quoc with 7,000 refugees, and as she lay at anchor on April 7, awaiting ship-to-shore transportation for the refugees, the report was "situation quiet." Refugees left the ship on April 9.

Under long-term charter to MSC, the Green Port was built in 1944 by Kaiser Inc., Richmond, Calif. Her overall length is 533 feet. Her beam is nearly 72 feet, and her draft is 33 feet.

The SS Transcolorado lifted a total of 12,200 South Vietnamese refugees in three trips prior to the Frequent Wind operation. Her first lift, with 3,500 refugees aboard, was from DaNang to Cam Ranh Bay. Almost as soon as the refugees left the ship at Cam Ranh, Trans-

American Challenger (foreground) and Pioneer Contender await barges.

colorado's crew received orders to evacuate refugees from Cam Ranh Bay itself. On their second voyage they carried 5,000 more refugees from Cam Ranh to Vung Tau. On their third refugee lift, the Transcolorado crew moved 3,700 refugees, transferred from the SS Durham at sea. Arriving at Phu Quoc, the ship lay at anchor with four other MSC ships, waiting for ship-to-shore transportation for the refugees.

Transcolorado was built in 1945 by Kaiser Inc. in Richmond, Calif. and is under long-term charter to MSC. Her overall length is 523 feet, with a beam of nearly 72 feet, and draft of 32½ feet.

USNS Greenville Victory was commandeered on April 4 during her lift of 7,000 refugees from Cam Ranh to Phu Quoc. South Vietnamese Marines forced the crew of Greenville Victory to take the ship to Vung Tau, near Saigon, where the refugees went ashore.

Greenville Victory is a Victory-class cargo vessel built by California Shipbuilders in Los Angeles, Calif. and delivered to the U.S. Navy on July 8, 1944. She has an overall length of 455 feet, with a 62-foot beam and 28½-foot draft.

Another government-owned vessel, USNS Sgt. Andrew Miller, lifted 15,300 refugees in her first three trips. On their initial voyage from DaNang to Cam Ranh, the crew of the Miller carried 7,500 refugees. On their next trip they took 300 refugees from Tuy Hoa to Phu Quoc Island, where the ship was anchored for several days. The Miller crew made a third run back to Cam Ranh where they took on 7,500 more refugees and delivered them to Phu Quoc Island. An attempt by refugees to divert the Sgt. Andrew Miller from Phu Quoc to Vung Tau was unsuccessful.

Miller is also a Victory-type cargo ship built by Permanente Metals Corp., Richmond, Calif. by Shipbuilding Division No. Two. She was delivered to the Navy on April 28, 1945, and has the same dimensions as Greenville Victory.

A third government-owned, MSC-operated vessel, USNS Sgt. Truman Kimbro, was kept on standby, first in Vung Tau and later in Ham Tan. Kimbro, however, was later involved in the evacuation of Saigon. She is also a Victory-type ship built in 1945 by Permanente Metals Shipbuilding Division No. One. Her statistics are identical to those for Miller. Kimbro was delivered to the Navy Dec. 22, 1944.

In addition to the ships actually involved in refugee lifts, three MSC chartered commercial vessels were in South Vietnamese waters carrying cargo, and could have been made available if needed. SS Green Wave, owned by Central Gulf Steamship Corp., left Subic Bay March 31 for Vung Tau. The Green Wave was built in 1944 by Kaiser Inc. in Richmond, Calif. The SS Pioneer Contractor, operated for MSC by United States Lines, was enroute from Balboa to Subic Bay on March 31. The Contractor was built in 1963 by Bethlehem Steel Co., Quincy, Mass. A third cargo ship, the SS American Racer, was enroute to Cam Ranh Bay on March 31. Racer, built in 1964 by Sun Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Co., Chester, Pa., is operated for MSC by United States Lines.—*CJB*

⚓

Marine PFC Joseph Johnson of Jettersville, Va. holds a Vietnamese baby during departure of refugees from Green Port.—Photo by MSgt. Chuck McCormick, USMC.

Supporting the Evacuation

While MSC and Navy cargo ships steamed up and down the coast of South Vietnam ferrying fleeing refugees, MSC manned oilers operating with the Seventh Fleet were busy refueling both vessels involved in the evacuation and fleet ships steaming off the coasts of Vietnam and Cambodia.

USNS Mispillion, under the command of Capt. Gottfried Krull, was first to arrive in the South China Sea and the crew immediately set to work refueling fleet units and providing stores and needed spare parts. Between March 30 and April 12, the ship conducted 31 underway replenishments.

Some of the Navy fleet ships Mispillion refueled were directly involved in the humanitarian effort. She transferred fuel twice to the USS Blue Ridge, Stoddert and the stores ship USS Vega, and once to the USS Dubuque, Durham and Cochrane.

Mispillion also transferred fuel to USNS Passumpsic and the Navy fleet oiler USS Ashtabula. In addition, the ship's crew conducted a helicopter vertical replenishment with the USS Blue Ridge, passing the ship a spare part.

The Men

United States Lines

SS American Challenger

Arthur F. Boucher, master, Willingboro, N.J.; Demosthenes Kukeas, 1st officer, Bronx; Doyle E. Dye, 2nd officer, McCrory, Ark.; Theodore F. Turner, 3rd officer, Charleston; James W. McMaster, 3rd officer; Ludington, Mich.; Benjamin F. Allendorf, radio officer, Oakland; Jean G. Sakalian, purser, Montrevel, France; Francis J. Clark, boatswain, Pasadena, Md.; George L. Hannen, deck utilityman, Mobile.

Able-bodied seamen Leroy Christopher, Baltimore; Ying Zang Tay, San Francisco; Albert L. Chandler, New Orleans; Arthur C. Franssens, Platte, S.D.; Thomas E. Atkins, Burnsville, S.C.; Leo Roberts, Baltimore. Ordinary seamen Warren Barras, New Orleans; Edward Martofel, Philadelphia; Elijah Williams, Mobile.

Paul F. Negy, chief engr., Sidman, Pa.; Joseph G. Greco, 1st asst. engr., Howard Beach, N.Y.; Rodney A. Geffers, 2nd asst. engr., Monterey Park, Calif. Harry F. Englehart, Severn, Md.; Arthur N. Chippendale, Gainesville; David A. Weston, Brewer, Maine; Mario C. White, Vancouver, Wash., all 3rd asst. engr.

Peter C. Goodwin, cadet engr., Gloucester, Maine; Willie T. Phillips, electrician, Kingstree, S.C.; Herman M. McCoy, Virginia Beach; Vernon Tasker, Portsmouth, Va.; and Johnnie Ellis, Savannah, all oilers. Candido B. Guity, Colon, Honduras; Thomas S. McField, Honduras, C.A.; and Brasmo Gonzales, Richmond Hill, N.Y., all

Captain Krull praised First Officer Richard Haugh for a night approach he made to the USS Enterprise off the coast of Cambodia and a day approach to the fleet stores ship USS Mars.

The captain also commended Haugh for another excellent approach and station maintenance while the Mispillion crew transferred fuel to USS Vega so she could carry much-needed supplies to refugees on Phu Quoc Island. Vega transferred provisions to the Mispillion for resupply of Navy ships in the area, freeing Vega to deliver supplies refugees needed.

USNS Passumpsic, under the command of Capt. Veachel Park, was diverted from normal duties near Subic Bay to support units standing off Cambodia and Vietnam on April 6. During the next week she conducted consolidations with Mispillion, Taluga and USS Mars.

Following the Vietnam operations, Capt. Lawrence Nasset succeeded Captain Park on April 20 in a routine rotation of masters.

USNS Taluga, commanded by Capt. James T. Gehrig, also replenished Seventh Fleet ships as they steamed to and from Subic Bay.—HLR

firemen-water tenders. Wipers: Woodrow Mitchell, Charleston; Crone Reynolds, Batesburg, S.C.

George T. Fellows, chief steward, West Palm Beach; Robert Mack, chief cook, Baltimore; Gordon G. Simpson, cook-baker, Charleston Heights, S.C.; Rudolph A. Butler, 3rd cook, New Orleans; Hereido Morales, galley utilityman, New York. Modesto Santiago, Ponce, P.R.; Ludvig J. Vanterpool, Richmond, Calif.; John H. Williams, Baltimore; and Clifford S. Neely, Joppa, Md., all messmen. Alexis Harris, steward utilityman, New Orleans.

SS Pioneer Commander

Peter J. Strachota, master, Asheville, N.C.; Bruno A. Spokas, 1st officer, Miami; James A. Courtney, 2nd officer, New York; Bradley U. Nichols, 3rd officer, Margate, Fla.; Robert A. Pechusick, 3rd officer, Woburn, Mass.; Max L. Miller, radio officer, Elizabeth City, N.J.; Joseph W. Rugenis, purser, N. Abington, Mass.; Verily Stuckey, boatswain, Newark; Alexander G. Sweet, deck utilityman, Salem, N.H.

Able-bodied seamen Frank Sullivan, Phoenix; Harry B. Leonard, Augusta; Ga. Denis J. O'Connor, Flushing, N.Y.; Charles L. Williams, Bronx; Ernesto Bennett, Staten Island; Thomas K. Notton, Superior, Wisc. Ordinary seamen Austin A. Webb, Jr., San Francisco; Raymond E. Lankford, Jr., Norfolk; Obie Hines, Galveston.

Charles T. Maher, chief engr., College Point, N.Y.; Robert L. Peay, Jr., 1st asst. engr., Ridgeway, N.C.; Walter T. Gibb, 2nd asst. engr., Oakland; Ralph E. Frink, Concord, Calif.; Robert W. Cattan, Newburyport, Mass.; Peter L. Smith, Woodbridge, Va.; George W. Dresser, Jr., Peekskill, N.Y., all 3rd asst. engrs. Andrew H. Smyth, cadet engr., Malverne, N.Y.

Emiliano Loriega, electrician, Brooklyn. Oilers William S. Chrnko, Wilksboro, Pa.; Jesse J. Scott, Whistler, Ala.; Albert D. Bergland, Newark. Firemen-water tenders Donald F. Strong, Sanibel Island, Fla.; Victor M. Figueroa, New York City; Andres Guerrero, Bronx. Wipers Marcelino Gonzalez, Bronx; Jesse O. Sparks, Marion, Ind.

Emilio Tirado, chief steward, Bronx; Lee Lung Poin, cook-baker, Miami; Allan Franklin, 3rd cook, Orangeburg, S.C.; Ralph Finnie, Jr., galley utilityman, Jacksonville. Messmen Gumersindo Benitez, Bronx; Charles L. Copeland, Chesapeake, Va.; Carmelo A. R. Rivera, Sector Pajores, P.R. Utilitymen: Richard Galloway, New York City; Robert S. Watkins, Yorktown Heights, N.Y. Elton Jackson, chief cook, Southport, N.C.

SS Pioneer Contender

Edward C. Flink, master, Massapequa, N.Y.; Robert D. Holoch, 1st officer, Fairfax, Calif.; George N. Zeluff, Jr., 2nd officer, San Diego; Joseph F. Delehant, 3rd officer, Rochester; Ross E. Pollock, 3rd officer, Oalamonte Springs, Fla.; Talmadge O. Moran, radio officer, Pearl River, La.; Clifford P. Rogero, purser, Jacksonville; Tranquilino P. Maravillas, boatswain, San Francisco; Julius Mathias, deck mate, Wilmington, N.C.

Able-bodied seamen Howard D. Pollard, Rio Dell, Calif.; Leo J. Duncan, Battle Lake, Minn.; Savino D. Avila, Daly City, Calif.; Sidney A. McKissick, Richmond Hills, Ga.; Dallas L. Tomison, Myrtle Creek, Ore.; Dugmore G. Ebanks, Sweden.

Ordinary seamen Frank West, Trenton; Clarence D. McBride, Berkeley; Hunter W. Howlett, Jr.

James P. Massey, chief engr., Twenty-Nine Palms, Calif.; Arne C. Jatko, 1st asst. engr. Apalachin, N.Y.; Douglas I. Morrison, 2nd asst. engr., Victoria, Australia; Norman L. Videau, Walnut Creek, Calif.; Arthur F. Jackman, Worchester, Mass.; Wallace J. Carnes, Jr., Neward, Del., all 3rd asst. engrs. Gerald H. Murphy, cadet engr., Stockton Springs, Me.

Phillip J. Goodson, electrician, Costa Rica. Oilers Donald L. Justice, Citrus Heights, Calif.; Alvester Craig, Castro Valley, Calif.; William R. O'Keefe, Albany, Mo. Fireman-water tenders Ricardo A. Navas, Bronx; Juan Gutierrez, Jersey City; Abdulla Saif, Egypt. Wipers Amos N. Lstroise, San Francisco; Joseph Ali Ahmed, Brooklyn.

Enrique A. Adelaida, chief steward, W. Germany; Naji S. Saiban, chief cook, San Leandro, Calif.; Ernest Poarch, cook-baker, Norfolk; Charles S. Toldon, 3rd cook, Berkeley, Calif.; Willie Glee, Jr., galley utilityman, Greenville, Fla. Messmen: Kim Wong, San Francisco; Monserrate Vega, Panama; Eugene Nelson, Jr., Jacksonville. Utilitymen Frank Ming, Long Island City; John Khan, Oakland.

Central Gulf Lines

Green Port

Saniago J. Gonzalez, master, Metairi, La.; Ira R. Gary, 1st officer, Bolton, Miss.; Robert C. Mckeithan, 2nd officer, Portsmouth, Va.; Terje H. Rinnan, Belgium; and Dewitt T. Durden, Spanish Fort, Ala., both 3rd officers; Jose E. Garcia, radio operator, Texas City, Texas; Clois V. Chastang, boatswain, Mobile; Paco M. Sanchez, deck utilityman, Longmeadow, Mass.; Auburn M. Dungan, Mobile, Loney Wilson, New Orleans; Michael A. Heyman, New York City; Alonza Carson, Burlington, N.J.; Michael J. Pender, Alameda, Calif.; and George A. Gleason, Lambertville, Minn.; all able bodied seamen.

Moises Martinez, Bayamon, P.R.; William Kwasnica, Sakatwoon, Canada; and Henry M. Williams, Los Angeles, all ordinary seamen.

Harry W. Lewis, chief engineer, Franklinton, La.; Leonard C. Crisp, 1st asst. engr., Hampton, Va.; Frederick W. Lalande, 2nd asst. engr., Englewood, Fla.; Fred C. Harper, Hot Springs, Ark.; and John M. Schell, Mobile, Ala.; both 3rd asst. engrs.; William L. Cornelius,

electrician, Norfolk.

William T. Brooks, Honduras; Joseph M. Gomez, Flushing, N.Y.; and Rufino C. Grueso, Colombia, all oilers.

Robert J. Lambert, Mobile; Rodrigo Almonte, Port Arthur, Texas; and Jose C. Melendez, New Orleans; all firemen-water tenders; Isaac L. Dennis, Wilmer, Ala.; and Junious Whitehead, Hudgins, Va.; both wipers.

Walter Mitchell, chief steward, New Orleans; Mack Perry, chief cook, New Orleans; Jacob J. Cambridge, cook-baker, New Orleans; Milton Ward, 3rd cook, New Orleans; Albert Bernard, Beaumont, Texas; Isidro H. Thomas, Port Arthur; Linwood N. Jones, Portsmouth, Va., and Horace Laster, Beaumont; all messmen.

Phillip Weaver, galley-utilityman, New Orleans; Warner M. Crawford, steward-utilityman, Coshocton, Ohio; and David M. Justice, 3rd asst. engr., Manning, S. C.

Refugees on the USNS Miller watch as Navy men aboard a landing craft from USS Dubuque prepare to hoist a pallet of supplies to the Miller's deck.

SeaTrain Lines

Transcolorado

Tyler B. Castle, master, LaVerne, Calif.; James M. Lambert, 1st officer, Winlock, Wash.; Joseph A. Cory, 2nd officer, Pasadena, Md.; Warren R. Gresham, 3rd officer, Norfolk; Spafford J. Whiting, 3rd officer, Honolulu; Norman White, radio officer, Hollywood, Calif.; Paul Whitlow, boatswain, Moline, Ill.

Willard Mask, Inglewood, Calif.; Carl Goff, Charleston, W. Va.; Whitten Hammock, Atlanta, Ga.; Chester Sommers, Nayville, N.Y.; Gordon Gradford, Seattle; Odell B. Powell, Brodnax, Va.; and John Lundborg, Naha, Okinawa; all able bodied seamen.

Glen A. Clark, Semmes, Ala.; John Berg, Eugene, Ore.; and James Purvis, El Monte, Calif.; all ordinary seamen.

William E. Freele, chief engineer, Menominee, Mich.; Stephen Koczian, 1st asst. engr., Bronx, N.Y.; Harold G. Bishop, 2nd asst, engr., Hebron, Ohio; Torberg Tonnesson, Brooklyn; Charles A. Welch, Norristown, Pa. and William D. Fisher, Quincy, Mass.; all 3rd asst. engrs.; Harold Hunt, chief electrician, Medford, Ore.; James L. Brock, 2nd electrician, Knoxville, Tenn.; and Nicholas G. Sakellarioes, engine maintenance, Silver Spring, Md.

Walter Kimbrough, Guthrie, Ky.; Raleigh L. Evans, Onancock, Va.; and Roy E. James, Galveston, all oilers; Pedro Flores, Brooklyn; John Murray, Seattle; both wipers.

Ferdinand Fletcher, chief steward, San Francisco; George O. Taylor, chief cook, Brooklyn; Willie Albert, cook-baker, Baltimore; Ernest W. Cox, 3rd cook, Lake Charles, La.; Joseph Roberts, Teaneck, N.J.; Johnnie Ferguson, Norfolk; William R. Nelson, Norfolk and Abdulla H. Shaibi, Delano, Calif., all utility messmen.

Military Sealift Command

USNS Sgt. Andrew Miller

Kurt Oltmeyer, master, Norfolk; Karmon M. Holm, 1st officer, Watford, N.D.; Augustus K. Forrest, Jr., 2nd officer, Randolph, Mass.; John R. Lubitz, 3rd officer, Glendale, N.Y.; Jeffrey G. Olson, 3rd officer, Rogers, Minn.; William J. Dowling, radio officer, E. Brunswick, N.J.; Astor A. Henderson, boatswain, New York City; Willie E. Smith, carpenter, Bronx.

Able-bodied seamen Vincent J. Danzi, Elmhurst, N.Y.; John W. Kish, Upper Saddle River, N.J.; Charles Fuentes, Puerto Rico; Harry B. Mass, Brooklyn; Frank A. Umbrecht, III, Miller Place, N.Y.; Robert J. Costin, Norfolk; Raul Vinas, Newark. Ordinary seamen Obed Rodriguez, Bronx; Ruben Jackson, Philadelphia; Rogers G. Porter, Algiers, La.; Jose R. Olivera, Brooklyn.

Harry Camell, chief engr., Twin Rocks, Pa.; Chester Forsyth, 1st asst. engr., Williamson, Va.; Robin G. Stroh, 2nd asst. engr., Massillon, Ohio; Joseph P. Constantineau, 3rd asst. engr., S. Yarmouth, Mass.; Ernest J. Rowillard, Jr., 3rd asst. engr., Brunswick, Maine; Martin Hoffman, chief electrician, Laurelton, N.Y.; Amos Allen, 2nd electrician, Marrero, La.

Engine utilitymen Don D. Lynn, Jr., Danville, Ill.; James E. O'Toole, Roselle, N.J.; Calvin F. Gaddy, Japan. William J. Harris, oiler, Norfolk. Firemen-water tenders James F. Springs, Mobile, Ala.; Matthew J. Murray, Cliffside Park, N.J.; John E. Wilson, Staten Island. Wipers Louis Birnbaum, Hoboken; Carlos De Jesus, New York City. James A. Eversley, chief steward, Seattle; Lenzie Malone, chief cook, Springfield Gardens, N.Y.

Messmen Elwood J. Cooper, New York; Gabino Burgado, Puerto Rico. Utilitymen Jacinto Lorenzo, Jackson Heights, N.Y.; Julius M. Pallay, New York; Francisco D. Rivera, Brooklyn; Nicholas Couvertier, New York. Guillermo G. Claudio, cook-baker, Ft. Lauderdale; Daniel Meyers, 3rd cook, Rockville Centre, N.Y.; Harold E. Reahl, purser, St. Petersburg, Fla.; Julius S. Weissman, yeoman storekeeper, Bronx.

USNS Greenville Victory

Raymond Iacobacci, master, Staten Island; Clinton J. Harriman, Jr., 1st officer, Cedar Grove, N.J.; Robert B. Silvey, 2nd officer, New Orleans; Paul L. Blain, 3rd officer, Great Britain; Karl P. Lonsdale, 3rd officer, Arlington, Va.; Armando Villamor, radio officer, Miami; Bernardo Liwanag, boatswain, Union City, N.J.; Harold J. Murphy, Jr., carpenter, Statelane, Nev.

Able-bodied seamen Cleo Bronson, New York; William J. Foley, Medway, Me.; Joseph Gioeli, Long Island; Ralph E. Gasson, Minneapolis; Harold W. Winkler, Hilliard, Fla.; Charles D. Rayburn, Jacksonville, N.C.

Ordinary seamen Herbert W. Berry, Jr., Savannah, Ga.; Cleveland B. Davis, Bronx; Robert Reyes, Brooklyn.

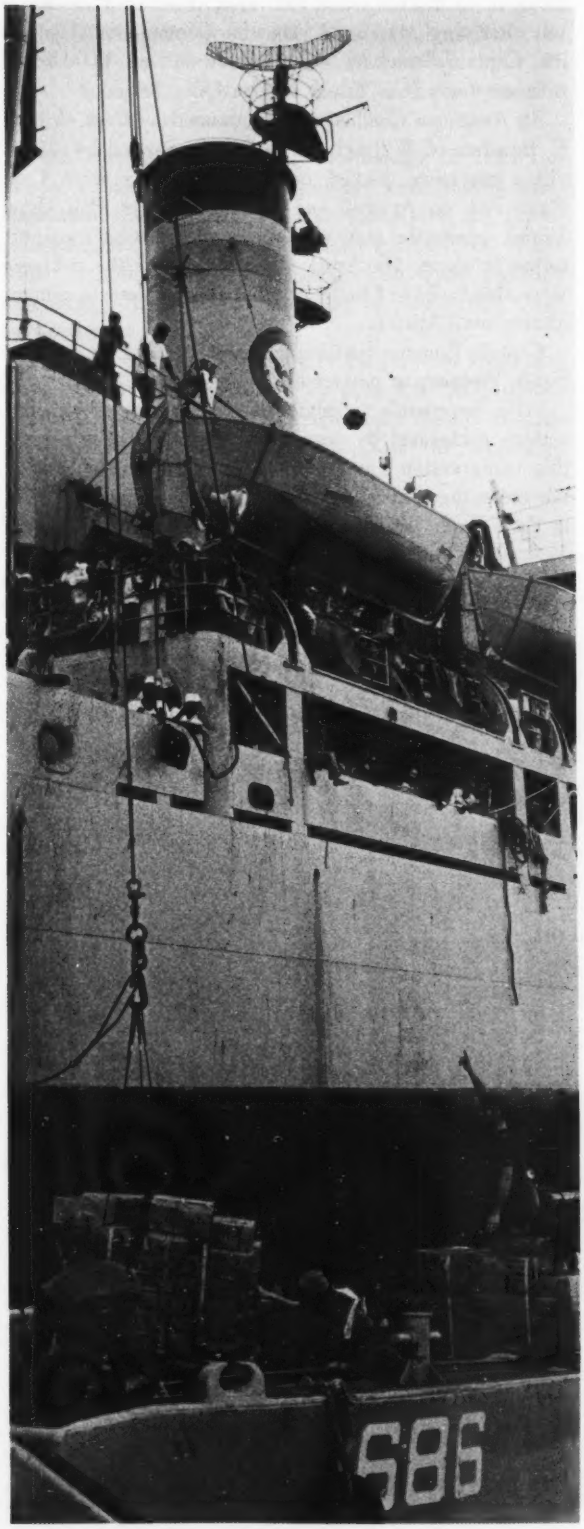
Yuen W. Woo, chief engr., Seattle; Alfred P. Lewandowski, 1st asst. engr., Springfield; Michael A. Saltwick, 2nd asst. engr., Dorchester, Mass.; Alexander Devet, 3rd asst. engr., Chicago, Ill.; Ralph Olsen, 3rd asst. engr., Brooklyn; Samuel I. Steward, chief electrician, Hollis, N.Y.; Howard L. Phillips, 2nd electrician, Long Island.

Engine utilitymen Ludvigs B. Camanis, Hoboken; Samuel Scott, Bronx. Oilers Epifanio Rodriguez, New York City; Oliver W. Bungard, Warsaw, Ind., Valentim R. Silva; Brooklyn. Firemen-water tenders Ronald G. Washington, Philadelphia; Clarence Ross, Bronx; Dionne D. Neely, Ingels, Kan. Wipers James McGee, Jr., New Orleans; Juan B. Ramirez, S. Ozone Park, N.Y.; Gary W. Meader, Skowegen, Me.

Carl J. Moore, chief steward, Portsmouth, Va.; Robert Paige, chief cook, Los Angeles. Messmen Wilson A. Gonzalez, Puerto Rico; Richard McDonough, Sommerville, Mass. Utilitymen Maximino Sanchez, Bronx; Kenneth W. Bethea, Jacksonville; Narcisso S. Tan, New York City; Johnny Barnard, Jersey City. Aleck G. Harrison, cook-baker, New Orleans; Miguel A. Rosa, 3rd cook, Woodside, N.Y.; Damon H. Smith, purser, Webster City; Iowa; Robert A. Griffin, yeoman-storekeeper, Mattapan, Mass. ⚓

U.S. Marines pass medical supplies up to the deck of SS Pioneer Contender.

We Were There



"I've been in the evacuations of Dunkerque and Korea, but I have never seen anything like this," said John Lambert of Winlock, Wash.

Lambert, chief officer on the SS Transcolorado, is one of the many civilian mariners who helped move South Vietnamese refugees to safety during a humanitarian sealift that began March 28 and lasted until April 10.

Routine "well done" messages fall far short of recognizing the efforts of officers and crewmen who worked to the limit of human endurance in the evacuation of nearly 113,000 South Vietnamese refugees in the two-week period. Throughout the 16 lifts, each MSC-controlled ship was a world in itself. Ship crews were the protectors of enough people to fill many of their own home towns.

Capt. Edward C. Flink of Massapequa, N.Y. and his crew of 43 merchant mariners manning the SS Pioneer Contender were the first to load refugees at DaNang on March 28. Boatswain Tranquilino P. Maravillas of San Francisco worked the controls of a cargo boom that lifted refugee-filled nets from a barge. Maravillas hauled loads of women and children over the ship's side and deposited them in the hold. Other crewmen formed a human chain to haul women and children up a heaving gangplank from the barge.

Captain Flink described the scene as frightened refugees came aboard. "In their anxiety to reach safety, they sometimes crawled over the backs of people in front of them," he said. "A number of boats were abandoned as their owners came on board. A steel hull power boat was going backward in a circle, billowing heavy smoke, the former owner and other occupants having left it for safety aboard this vessel."

There were barely enough supplies on board for the crew, let alone 5,600 refugees. But members of the crew raided the pantry, boiled two buckets of eggs and gave them to sick children with their own milk rations. Crewmen also turned their quarters into a temporary hospital. A baby was brought in half an hour after it was born in one of the crowded holds.

The Contender moved the first load of refugees to Cam Ranh Bay. Captain Flink and his crew took their vessel back to DaNang to deliver another 6,000 refugees to Cam Ranh. They made their third run from Cam Ranh Bay to Phu Quoc Island in the Gulf of Siam carrying 16,600 refugees, the largest number carried at one time by any vessel during the evacuation.

For several days the Contender lay at anchor under the sizzling sun off Phu Quoc Island. Hose couplings

A Navy boatswain's mate signals the boom operator aboard USNS Miller to lift a supply pallet to the deck.

broke several times as crewmen tried to keep water barrels filled for use by refugees.

Captain Flink reported on April 4, "One crew member incapacitated for awhile because of over-fatigue. Most of the remainder of the crew are dead on their feet due to long hours spent in assisting refugees in addition to performing normal duties."

On April 7 Captain Flink radioed another message, "Mike boats from Dubuque delivered K-rations which were distributed about whole ship. When the U.S. Marine guard changed at 1500 hours today, they were greeted by loud howls from the refugees holding up signs of SOS and 'we want to be landed, too.' About 150 males using the wood pallets that the K-rations were on tried swimming ashore. When last seen were fairly close to the beach. This makes the fourth day that the refugees have been on board, some longer, having made the trip from DaNang to Cam Ranh on this vessel."

Four births occurred on board the Contender with assistance from crewmen of the United States Lines ship.

Civilian mariners aboard the Contender, like those on board the United States Lines ships Pioneer Commander and American Challenger, are represented by four different unions. Unlicensed seamen are represented by the National Maritime Union (NMU). Other unions representing crewmen are the International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots (MM&P); Marine Engineers Beneficial Assn. (MEBA), District One; the Radio Officers' Union, and the Marine Staff Officers (MSO).

Capt. Peter J. Strachota of Asheville, N.C. commanded SS Pioneer Commander which made two refugee lifts. Captain Strachota and his crew of 43 men loaded 8,000 refugees in DaNang and delivered them to Cam Ranh Bay, arriving March 31. On the Commander's second lift, Captain Strachota and his crew moved 8,000 more refugees from Nha Trang to Phu Quoc Island.

SS American Challenger, commanded by Capt. Arthur F. Boucher of Willingboro, N.J. and manned by 44 civilian mariners, picked up 9,850 refugees from Cam Ranh Bay on April 2 and carried them to Phu Quoc Island, where the ship was anchored awaiting transportation to shore, On April 4 nearly half of the refugees were able to leave Challenger, but the rest had to remain aboard until April 8.

Captain Boucher had high praise for his crew and for South Vietnamese personnel on board the Challenger.

"It is impossible to relate all of the many noteworthy actions performed by crew members in assisting during this embarkation," he said. "It is unbelievable that of the more than 9,000 souls involved in the embarkation at Cam Ranh and debarkation at Phu Quoc, there was

Refugees literally overflowed the Pioneer Contender.

not one reported accident as a result of using the embarkation facilities."

"They worked almost constantly treating patients for wounds and various maladies, including many cases of conjunctivitis and measles. From the beginning on April 2, to 12 noon April 6 when relieved by a unit from the Marine Corps, some members of the vessel's crew assisted Dr. Chi (Vietnamese doctor, also a refugee) and his nurses in treating patients."

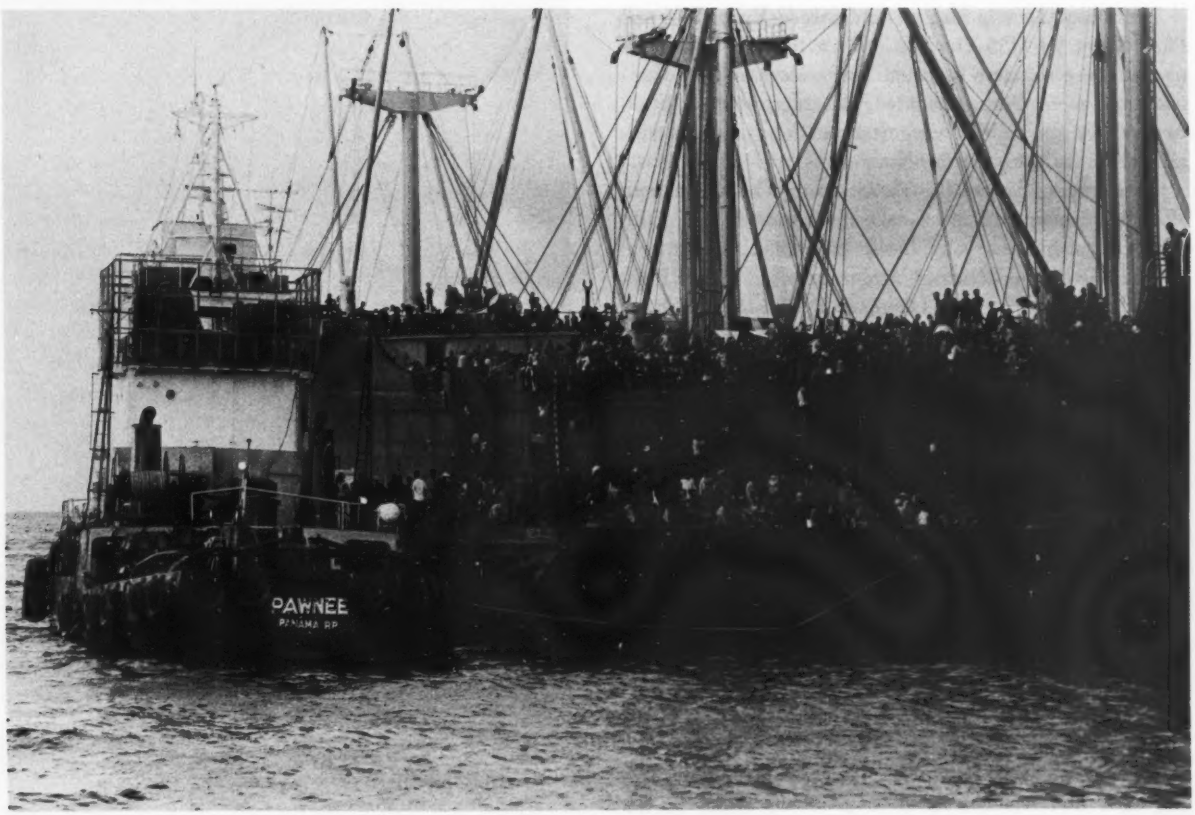
Capt. Roy W. McLain, Jr., commander of USS Dubuque, a Navy amphibious transport, coordinated relief operations aboard the Challenger, Contender, SS Transcolorado, SS Green Port, and USNS Sgt. Andrew Miller while the ships were anchored off Phu Quoc awaiting unloading of the refugees. Dubuque arrived at Phu Quoc on April 6.

Two medical teams from the Dubuque went from ship to ship. Each team was made up of a U.S. Navy doctor and several U.S. Navy corpsmen from the 3d Marine Division. Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Bill Travis of Mt. Vernon, Iowa tended refugees aboard the Challenger.

"I worked all day and all night when I first got on board," he said, "seeing and treating more patients than I could count. Then I kept right on through the next day, not only treating patients but carrying small children down the rope net to the barge—it wasn't until things began to get under control and quiet down that I realized how tired I was."

Several other Navy ships provided 18,000 pounds of supplies from their stocks for MSC vessels at Phu Quoc. Cmdr. William G. Carson of Huntington Beach, Calif., commanding officer of USS Thomaston, aided MSC ships as did Cmdr. John M. Rogers of Dallas, Texas, commanding officer of the guided missile destroyer USS Henry B. Wilson. Cmdr. James E. Shay of Jacksonville, Fla., commanding the destroyer USS Edson, also dispensed supplies to MSC ships at Phu Quoc while the Navy stores ship USS Vega, commanded by Cmdr. Ralph E. Brown, Jr. of LaCanada, Calif., brought supplies into the Phu Quoc area.

Other Navy ships whose crews gave aid to MSC's refugee-laden ships included the amphibious transport USS Durham, commanded by Capt. Daniel T. Bridge of Staten Island, N.Y.; amphibious command ship USS Blue Ridge, under the command of Capt. William D. Hart of Bartow, Fla.; and the tank landing ship USS Frederick, commanded by Cmdr. Roger M. Daily, East Bucksport, Maine.



Refugees scramble down Green Port cargo nets and Jacob's ladders onto a Seapac barge. The tug Pawnee then towed them to Phu Quoc Island a mile away.

In one voyage, the MSC-controlled SS Green Port, commanded by Saniago J. Gonzalez of Metairi, La. and manned by 41 civilian mariners transported 7,000 refugees from Cam Ranh Bay to Phu Quoc Island. Some of the refugees had not eaten for three days prior to leaving Cam Ranh, and the master and crew feared hunger and overcrowding might create problems. Later, the refugees did try to convince the crew of the Green Port to divert the ship to Vung Tau.

After the Green Port anchored off Phu Quoc Island the refugees received aid from the Dubuque's medical team and supplies from the other Navy ships.

Four unions represent the crew of the Green Port. Unlicensed seamen belong to the NMU, masters, mates and pilots belong to MM&P, and other licensed seamen are members of MEBA, District One. Radio officers belong to the American Radio Assn.

Capt. Tyler B. Castle of LaVerne, Calif. commanded a crew of 38 aboard SS Transcolorado in three refugee lifts. On their first trip, Captain Tyler and crew carried 3,500 refugees from DaNang to Cam Ranh Bay.

Almost as soon as Transcolorado had delivered the refugees to Cam Ranh, the captain was directed to evacuate refugees from Cam Ranh itself. On their second lift, Captain Castle and his crew carried 5,000 more refugees from Cam Ranh to Vung Tau. "We weren't in too much danger as long as we had enough food and water on board," said one crewman.

Transcolorado was met at sea between Vung Tau and Phan Thiet by USS Durham with a load of 3,700 refugees. These refugees boarded Transcolorado from sampans and were transported to Phu Quoc Island. While they waited for shore transportation, they received supplies and medical aid from Navy ships.

Officers and crew of the Transcolorado belong to one of four unions: SIU, for unlicensed seamen; MM&P; MEBA, District One; and Radio Officers' Union.

USNS Greenville Victory, commanded by Capt. Raymond Iacobacci of Staten Island, N.Y. and manned by a Civil Service crew of 47 men, was commandeered on April 4 while enroute to Phu Quoc Island from Cam Ranh Bay with a cargo of 7,000 refugees. South Vietnamese marines forced the master to divert the ship to Vung Tau. That day, Captain Iacobacci radioed, "Crew has been working around the clock, doing their very best to maintain harmony."

After the last of the refugees had left Greenville Victory at Vung Tau, U.S. Navy doctors and a hospital corpsman from USS Blue Ridge boarded the ship to check out crewmen. Lt. (Dr.) Thomas W. Harris, Lt. (Dr.) Kent Andrus, and Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Steve Rowell reported conditions aboard the Greenville Victory. "The crew is in a lot better shape than I expected," said Dr. Harris.

Corpsman Rowell had praise for the Greenville Victory crew and medical attention given the refugees. He pointed out that the only medical expertise aboard the Greenville Victory was First Officer Clinton J. Harriman, Jr. who had taken a first aid course. But Harriman, of Cedar Grove, N.J., had a limited amount of medical supplies to work with.

"For a crew of only 47 men, trying to control, feed and care for the many needs of 7,000 Vietnamese, both sick and healthy, must have been a phenomenal task," Dr. Harris said.

When it was all over, Captain Iacobacci said he felt as if he had lost six months of his life and gained a few more gray hairs.

MSC Civil Service mariners aboard the Greenville Victory and the USNS Sgt. Andrew Miller are represented by five unions. Unlicensed seamen are represented by NMU, licensed seamen by MEBA, District One and MM&P. Radio officers are represented by the Radio Officers' Union, and pursers by MSO. MSC Civil Service crewmen may join maritime unions, but are not required to do so.

Capt. Kurt Oltmeyer, of Norfolk, Va., commanded 46 men aboard the USNS Sgt. Andrew Miller which made three refugee lifts. On their initial lift they took 7,500 refugees from DaNang to Cam Ranh Bay. Captain Oltmeyer and his crew moved two loads of refugees to Phu Quoc Island, 300 from Tuy Hoa and 7,500 more from Cam Ranh Bay.

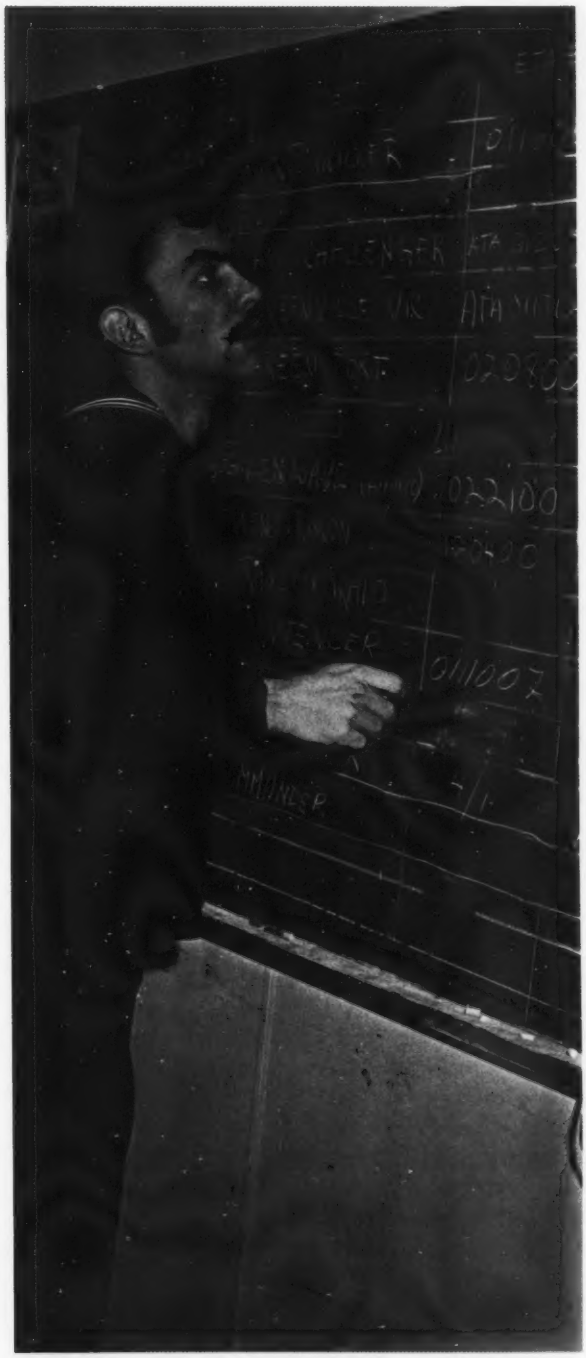
Captain Oltmeyer said he would have taken the ship to DaNang again if more could have been saved, but the fall of the city prohibited further large-scale evacuations. He remembered a day in 1939 when a ship captain he never met ignored the three-mile limit to pluck him and others off the Netherlands coast in the face of advancing German armies. "Now I have had my turn to help somebody," Captain Oltmeyer said.

U.S. Marine security forces of 40 to 50 men from the 1st Batallion, 4th Marine Regiment, were put aboard several of the MSC ships that carried refugees to insure order. At Phu Quoc, where the unloading was slow and the refugees restless, the need for the Marines was evident. First Lt. Robert E. Lee, officer-in-charge of the force aboard the Contender, had to fire a warning shot to keep refugees from trampling each other as they hurried off the ship.

Captain Flink radioed from the Contender that the "Marine guard did a good job in distributing rice."

When the unloading at Phu Quoc was over and the Marines left the MSC ships, Lieutenant Lee recommended that the Contender's crew be recognized by an appropriate command for their efforts. He said he was "proud to assist crewmen of such high caliber and unselfish devotion to duty and one's fellow man."—*CJB*

We call it 'the cage'



QM3 Kim Bickford updates ship status on a board.

"We call it the cage," said Davidson E. Cook, special assistant for Military Sealift Command's headquarters office of operations.

"Love it. I'm right here where the action is," said Buddye E. Noland, operations secretary.

"You know, you can get hooked on this," said Patricia Sarver, special projects division secretary.

All three were commenting on the MSC Command and Control Center which was activated early March 25 when it was apparent that MSC would be heavily involved in transporting the thousands of South Vietnamese refugees attempting to escape from advancing North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops.

From that Tuesday the control center, or CCC, became a window on the often dramatic Vietnam sealift evacuation. The center was initially opened 14 hours each day but soon geared up to around-the-clock, seven-days-a-week operations.

Rear Adm. Sam H. Moore, MSC commander, directed command operations from the "war room" as the CCC became known to some employees. Sealift requirements for the humanitarian evacuation were set by the State Department and carried out by the Department of Defense.

To insure smooth functioning of emergency operations, many decisions had to be made on the spot by State Department representatives, by the MSC office in Saigon, and by the Pacific Command representative in Saigon, Rear. Adm. Hugh A. Benton. Despite the problems of time and distance, close coordination among the MSC commander, State Department, Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Chief of Naval Operations staff was necessary to control costs, distribute ship assets, assure crew safety and provide necessary supplies, including medicine, food and fuel.

Timely information available in the CCC made Admiral Moore's task somewhat easier. "Everyone in the CCC did a tremendous job, and helped assure that this humanitarian operation was even more effective than could be expected," he said.

Hundreds of messages from the Chief of Naval Operations, MSC controlled cargo ships transporting the refugees, the State Department, the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, from the Defense Department, Commander of MSC Far East, the MSC office in Vietnam, the Secretaries of State and Defense and from scores of other officials flowed into the 22-by-24-foot room.

Admiral Moore, Joseph A. Brogan, Jr., MSC deputy executive director, and other top headquarters personnel

were given twice-a-day briefings, including weekends.

Dominated by an 8-by-16-foot chart of the world, the CCC has four blackboards and a like number of sliding panels listing various pieces of information—ships directly involved in the evacuation, those on standby, estimated times of arrivals at various ports, numbers of refugees, tugs and barges and their operations, distances between ports, and other pertinent information. Even a notice of sunsets and darkness at Vung Tau, high water and low, and flood and ebb currents at Saigon was posted.

The boards, as the panels and blackboards became collectively known, were continually changed as messages came in.

"We devised these boards for quick reference," said Mr. Cook. "We received all sorts of telephone calls for information and had to give immediate answers." This information, he said, was necessary to give a complete picture of the sealift evacuation.

Capt. Henry J. Lyon, assistant chief of staff for operations, had overall responsibility for operation of the CCC.

A team of marine transportation specialists from the cargo division—John Ryan, head of the operations branch; Gilbert Quackenbush, head of intermodal systems and maritime matters branch; George Tickell, head of requirements, analysis and procedures branch, and Robert Pleas, operations, stood eight-hour watches between 4 p.m. and 8 a.m. Mr. Cook took the day watch.

They were assisted by Miss Noland, day CCC secretary. For about two weeks early in the operations, she had worked 12 hours a day, seven days a week. As the activity slowed, she cut her workday to eight and nine hours, but remained on duty seven days a week.

Others on CCC night duty included Yeomen 2nd Class John C. Pilling, Fidel G. Taparra, Paul R. Yancey and Yeoman Seaman Apprentice Alan D. Fountain. Day aides were Quartermaster 1st Class Michael L. Runkle, Quartermaster 3rd Class Kim D. Bickford and Quartermaster Seaman Apprentice Jennifer E. Moon. Carl F. Tomlin, deputy director of cargo division and Miss Sarver filled in when necessary.

"When we began 24-hour operations," said Mr. Cook, "we really didn't know what to expect."

It didn't take long to find out. During the two weeks between March 28 when the civilian-manned, MSC-chartered cargo ship SS Pioneer Contender loaded the first group of evacuees at DaNang, until the Contender, completing its third evacuation voyage, unloaded the last South Vietnamese on Phu Quoc Island on April 10, nearly 113,000 evacuees had been sealifted to various safe ports.

Messages arrived over the electronic courier circuit on which priority, immediate and flash type messages, both classified and unclassified, are sent. After the date, time and subject of each message were logged with the headquarters communications division, the original was placed on the "admiral's board" which was kept in the CCC. A carbon of the original was used as the working copy when the message required action.

Each morning and afternoon Mr. Cook would brief Admiral Moore on overall ship movements and problems that had occurred, or might occur. Also each day, sometimes twice, an MSC controlled ship capability message was sent to various groups such as the JCS, CNO, CINCPAC and Logistic Readiness Center.

An MSC evacuation assets report was worked up each morning and sent to the same groups in a continuous effort to keep all agencies and groups involved in the evacuation informed.

In effect, said Mr. Cook, "The Department of Defense looked to MSC for the overall sealift picture and the operations center at the State Department relied on the CCC for its information."

As evacuation message traffic increased, it was necessary to build a call director for an automatic secure voice communications box, uncommonly known as AUTOSEVOCOM. During World War II this electronic device was known as a "scrambler." Conversations containing classified information become inaudible to

Command Center Commended

"The performance of duty by personnel manning the MSC Command and Control Center during Southeast Asia evacuation operations has been outstanding," said Vice Adm. Joseph P. Moorer, deputy chief of naval operations for plans, policy and operations.

In a letter of April 18, eight days after nearly 113,000 refugees were evacuated to safe havens by MSC controlled cargo ships, Admiral Moorer said the MSC command center was "a key source of location and status information since the inception of the evacuation operations."

In extending his personal appreciation and commendation to all persons concerned, he said, "The detailed information on MSC controlled shipping which has been consistently available on short notice attests to both the conscientiousness and dedication of each watchstander and the highly effective organizational management of the command center."

persons who might have the telephone line tapped.

To make a secure telephone call, another scrambler must be on the other end of the line. Unfortunately the secure line in Saigon had already become a casualty.

Even so, about four calls a day were made to the MSC office in Saigon and Yokohama where MSC, Far East is headquartered. Almost daily, Admiral Moore talked with Admiral Benton. Because Saigon is half-way around the world from the Washington, D.C. MSC headquarters, and 12 hours ahead in time, "we've had to get Admiral Benton out of bed a few times," said Miss Noland.

The CCC is an element of the Worldwide Military Command and Control System, or WWMCCS. (See Sealift, October 1973).

Each major command has been or will be connected to WWMCCS which, among other information, records the position of every MSC controlled vessel in the world, movement reports and ship characteristics.

It works this way. Since the summer of 1973 arrival and departure reports, course changes, weather changes and emergency conditions have been reported to movement report centers or movement report offices at various locations around the world. This information ultimately, but quickly, gets to the computer facility at the Washington Navy Yard and fed into the memory bank of a Honeywell computer.

Every eight hours, each ship's position, her estimated time of arrival at various points and other necessary data are recorded. In the CCC is a red box about the size of a 9-inch television set. Below the screen is a panel of keys like those on a typewriter. This remote terminal is connected with the computer and in a matter of seconds information is transmitted from the computer and displayed on the red box's screen. The terminal also can print the information on paper.

Ship information, however, is only part of the total information package that eventually will be available. In the near future, the JCS will be able to tell where every ship, tank, plane and military battalion is located.

Meanwhile, back in the CCC, as the eyes of the red alert regulars became reddened from lack of sleep, Mr. Cook noted that "eventually you start to lose track of time. The clock goes faster than at anytime in your life and sometimes you don't even know what day it is. It absorbs your whole life."

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Davidson Cook shows ship assignments in evacuations.

Rear Adm. Sam H. Moore studies a report as Capt. Henry J. Lyon (seated, left) looks at status board.

Refugees Lifted by MSC-Controlled Ships

March 28 Through May 15

Ship	Total no. refugees
American Challenger	23,500
American Racer	3,900
Boo Heung Pioneer	7,200
Green Forest	8,000
Green Port	15,000
Green Wave	5,200
Pioneer Commander	22,000
Pioneer Contender	34,200
Pioneer Contractor	100
Seapac tugs and barges	6,800
Transcolorado	11,800
USNS Greenville Victory	10,000
USNS Kimbro	8,200
USNS Miller	23,000
Vera 8	150
Total	179,050

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